



Worship: Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 18, 2022
Rev. Peter Wilkinson

* If you are able, please stand



We invite you to use this portal as a way to let us know you are here and for any joys or concerns you want to share with us.

PRELUDE Christmas Pastorale on 'Silent Night' (Roger C. Wilson)

CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING ADVENT CANDLES

Thank you God for your promise to love us always, with a comforting love. Stay with us this week as we await the chance to know your love made visible in this world. God of hope, God of peace, God of joy, God of love... into our darkness come. Amen.

* **HYMN #97** Watchman, Tell Us of the Night

1. Watchman, tell us of the night,
what its signs of promise are.
Traveler, what a wondrous sight:
see that glory-beaming star.
Watchman, does its beauteous ray
news of joy or hope foretell?
Traveler, yes; it brings the day,
promised day of Israel.
2. Watchman, tell us of the night;
higher yet that star ascends.
Traveler, blessedness and light,
peace and truth its course portends.
Watchman, will its beams alone
gild the spot that gave them birth?
Traveler, ages are its own;
see, it bursts o'er all the earth.

3. Watchman, tell us of the night,
 for the morning seems to dawn.
 Traveler, shadows take their flight;
 doubt and terror are withdrawn.
 Watchman, you may go your way;
 hasten to your quiet home.
 Traveler, we rejoice today,
 for Emmanuel has come!

CALL TO CONFESSION

In this season of waiting, in this time of preparation, we long to draw closer to God, as a comfort and as our savior. So often, we get in our own way; we make choices that trip us up as we move toward God. So then, let us make our confession, let us pray together:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Holy God, we aspire to love and trust you,
 But so often we get in the way of ourselves.
 We see only the deep sadness of the world,
 and do not notice your people at work amid the sorrow.
 We assume that things will never get better,
 And do not see all that is good right now.
 We close our eyes and complain about the darkness,
 Rather than see the light that shines all around us.
 Help us, Holy One. Help us to grow in love and trust, in compassion and hope, so that as the
 Christ Child comes to us once again,
 We will see him, and know him, and rejoice. Amen.**

INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Please take this time for personal confession

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Friends, hear this good news: in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven, and freed to love and serve.

Alleluia! Amen.

*** GLORIA PATRI**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

(If you are participating today through Facebook, please register your peace for each other now.)
 Since God has forgiven us in Christ,
 we also should forgive one another.
 The peace of Christ be with you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. May we approach your Word today, Holy God, with the reverence and respect it deserves. Let us be intentional in our listening and focused in our minds as we hear your Word read and proclaimed today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 70:1-7, 17-19

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth ²before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us ³Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. ⁴O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? ⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. ⁶You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. ⁷Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

¹⁷But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. ¹⁸Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. ¹⁹Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Matthew 1:18 - 25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah* took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' ²²All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
 and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;* and he named him Jesus.

The word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM The Little Road to Bethlehem (Michael Head) - The Chancel Choir

*As I walked down the road at set of sun, the lambs were coming homewards one by one,
I heard a sheep-bell softly calling them along the little road to Bethlehem.
Beside an open door, as I drew nigh, I heard sweet Mary sing a lullaby.
She sang about the lambs at close of day, and rocked her tiny King among the hay.
Across the air the silver sheep-bell rang, "The lambs are coming home," sweet Mary sang,
"Your star of gold, your Star of gold is shining in the sky, so sleep my little King, go lullaby."*

TIME WITH YOUNG DISCIPLES

SERMON

Our ever-surprising Creator knew the depth and potential of the creatures that had been created. God also knew that human beings are far more touched and convinced by pictures, images, and stories than they are by abstractions, concepts, ideas, and logic.

God so loved the world that the Holy One entered the fabric of human history as a human being and revealed the mercy, love, and forgiveness at the heart of the Divine Creator in a way we human beings could understand.

Morton Kelsey - The Drama of Christmas

* **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (unison)

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts,
 as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 forever. Amen.

OFFERING

Virtual and in-person giving opportunities:

- 1) Online at our Easytithe site -
<https://app.easytithe.com/app/giving/centralmontclair>
- 2) Place offerings in the trays at the doors of the sanctuary as you depart.



* DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above,
 ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Offering Prayer

**Christ Jesus, Author of our Salvation, we present ourselves to you as
 your workers, and we present our gifts and goods to you for your work,
 with praise on our lips and thanks in our hearts. Amen.**

* HYMN #115 Away in a Manger

1. Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
 the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
 The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
 the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing; the poor baby wakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

* **CHARGE/BLESSING**

POSTLUDE Noel! (Iris Ackenhusen)

Central's Mission Statement:

“As disciples of Jesus Christ and good stewards of God’s Grace, we are a caring, inclusive congregation that strives to grow in Christian faith, proclaim the Good News, and provide service in ministry to each other, our diverse community, and the world.”

Central Presbyterian Church is a Covenant Network congregation, a community within the Presbyterian Church, USA, that seeks to be inclusive, particularly with regard to welcoming LGBT persons as members and leaders.

The Call to Worship and Prayer of Confession were written by Beth Merrill Neel on her blog, ‘Hold Fast to What Is Good.’ Used with permission.

December Birthdays

- 2 Morgan Moulongo
- 4 David George
- 8 Aaliyah Ali
- 10 Eden Selassie
- 15 Martha Day
- 16 Karen Campbell
 - Jennifer (Alissa) Cabezas
 - Lauren Waisanen
- 17 Betty Girma-Hall
- 23 Shane Faber
- 24 Lukas Selassie



Christmas Poinsettias you see today are provided
by members of the church in Honor of and in Memory of loved ones.

In Memory of Wilhelmina Mitchell, and Anthony Valentine, and in Honor
of Agnes Daniel, from the Mitchell Family.

In Memory of Irene Jackson (mother), and Pam Kowzowski-Lopez (niece),
from Emma Justice.

In Memory of Lois and George Edgar Dean, and in Honor of Adelle and
Tom Buck, from Carolyn Buck.

In Honor of Bob George, in Memory of Margaret George, and in Memory
of Jim and Sharon Krizner from the George Family.

In Honor of Sarah Hohn (mother), and in Memory of Charity Sossah (aunt),
from the Moulongo Family.

In Honor of Morgan Moulongo, Ed Alstrom, Arshon Moses and Peter
Wilkinson, from Neal Day.

In Memory of Gordon Dancy, and in Memory of Judy Tormey, from Pat and
Barry Dancy.

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